

Placer County

Telephone; email; internet, video

Value of distance services

Geographic spread of county—from Sacramento to Nevada border.

- Burden on M-F 8-5 workers to get to courthouse for services
 - Also stay at home parents, daycare providers
- Less staff time per customer—phone service rarely lasts more than 5 minutes, in clinic visits typically 30 minutes. Customers who haven't gone through inconvenience of in person visit are more willing to do work themselves.
- Phone service doubled customer contacts and reduced clinic visits by 20%; additionally there were fewer turn aways. Before phone service started, clinic sign ins often closed at 8:15-8:30 when clinic starts at 9:00. After, sign ins often not closed until 10:30; sometimes never closed.
- Reduces foot traffic in crowded courthouse

Telephone service

- Two options:
 - Live: Staff available to answer phones and provide customer service
 - Voicemail-based: Customers leave a message and staff return call later
 - Physical plant may drive choice of service type—in Placer, there isn't a separate, quiet room suitable for phone service, so callbacks are done in afternoons after walk in clinic closes.

Live service: pro's and con's

- Pro
 - Can get more in-depth info from the customer.
 - Better for urgent customer problems (no delay).
- Con
 - Staff availability—must be available during business hours, no flexibility on scheduling.
 - Customers can only access service during business hours.
 - Awkward if you need to get the file to answer question.
 - Must do FLF disclosure verbally at start of call.

Voicemail: Pro's and Con's

- Pro:
 - Can do FLF disclosure on the outgoing message.
 - Flexible hours for service/returning calls.
 - Customers can call at any time (sometimes messages are left at odd hours) and can get callback.

- Con:
- Possibility of phone tag—causes problems if customer doesn't leave detailed message explaining problem.
- Subject to delay sometimes. (flip side of flexibility—if someone out sick, calls back up—when this happens, clinic visits go up)

The Call

- Before call, see if file needed
- Confirm FLF disclosure
- Get info from customer
- Schedule for workshop, or refer to EZLegalFile or courtinfo.ca.gov or FAQs on court's website
- Email links to forms, instructions

Email services

- Through court's webmail ("Contact the Court" feature on court's website)
- Email responses similar to phone calls but common answers can be cut and pasted or links to FAQs emailed.

Court's website

- Doesn't look fabulous but is useful. http://www.placerco.org/d_fcc.htm
- FAQs created from instruction sheets with links included.

Video/DVD

- "How to do your own divorce without shooting yourself in the foot."
- 90 minute overview of divorce law and process. (Community vs. separate, valuation, division, commingling and tracing, disclosures, Epstein/Watt, spousal support, child custody, various mediation systems, child support, MSA's vs. stipulated judgments; legal advice; ways to make agreements, e.g. mediation, collaborative negotiation) Information is not specific to Placer County—video was made anticipating statewide use.
- Available in all Placer public libraries
- Sold at nominal cost (\$10) in court or \$13 mail order (instructions on website)
- Will sell to other library systems in bulk \$4/ea; will also sell to other courts at same price for resale on site. \$10 seems to be affordable to most people, many will purchase because at that price, it's less hassle than going to library. Customers who purchase it indicate that they watch it repeatedly, initially to get understanding of their issues, and later for refresher and before their attorney consultation. We have a LOT of settlement agreements and very few "true default" divorce cases. Many couples arrive together in the clinic to do their agreements and indicate that they saw the video (they recognize the person in the video as a clinic staff member).